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1981/05/28



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

S/S

EXCISE

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TO: The Secretary
FROM: EA - John H. Holdridge *JHH*
SUBJECT: Strategy on Kampuchea

BACKGROUND

Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in December 1978 created a situation of unresolved tension in Southeast Asia with global overtones. The Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea threatens the security of Thailand, and is unacceptable to ASEAN, China, and the United States. It is a principal reason for the Sino-Vietnamese tensions which have erupted in periodic border clashes. These clashes, in turn, Hanoi claims with propagandistic impact are evidence of the "Chinese threat" which Vietnam asserts is the reason for its presence in Kampuchea and its increasingly close ties with the Soviet Union. A resolution of the situation in Kampuchea, which would require withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the establishment of an at least nominally independent Khmer government, would be the crucial first step, but only the first step in resolving the region's tensions. An overall solution to the tension in the region would also require a mitigation in Sino-Vietnamese hostility, and a reduction of Soviet access and influence in Vietnam.

ASEAN has taken the lead in bringing forcefully to world attention the threat from Soviet-Vietnamese expansionism. Thailand, as the frontline state, has set the pace. Despite differing views within ASEAN, its members have supported Thai positions when the chips were down. Indonesia and Malaysia have worried that close Thai-Chinese cooperation in supporting the Khmer resistance and pressuring Vietnam ignores China's past and potential designs on the area. Indonesia, in particular, is more inclined than its partners to deal with Vietnam in a regional context and to seek accommodation with Vietnam on terms closer to those sought by Vietnam, which Thailand believes would jeopardize its national security.

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U.S. OBJECTIVES

U.S. objectives concerning Kampuchea and Vietnam are the following:

- a. Strengthening of ASEAN, and preservation of Thai security;
- b. Withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea;
- c. Khmer survival and national self-determination;
- d. Reduction of Soviet influence and elimination of Soviet military access in Indochina.

U.S. Policy

Our policy has sought to straddle the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in the Indochina situation, to take into account the interests of Thailand, ASEAN, and China without compromising the interests of the United States.

This policy has been rooted in firm support for the ASEAN consensus and vigorous support for implementation of the ASEAN sponsored UNGA resolution on Kampuchea as the best basis for a settlement. The resolution calls for an international conference on Kampuchea to achieve withdrawal of Vietnamese forces and Khmer self-determination.

-- We seek now to strengthen the consensus based on the UNGA Resolution, to isolate Vietnam further politically and economically, and maintain the various pressures on Hanoi. Just as we cannot expect the Khmer resistance to drive the Vietnamese militarily from Kampuchea, we do not expect that any single component of the pressure will do so. Rather it is the collective pressures of an intractable insurgency against their control of Kampuchea; international isolation; economic deterioration at home, inability to integrate southern Vietnam into the SRV political, economic or social system; deep malaise among the Vietnamese population, including profound dissatisfaction with the policies Hanoi is pursuing; increasing Soviet influence, unpopular in Vietnam; and the continuing threat perceived from China: these pressures in the aggregate may lead Hanoi to compromise on Kampuchea. In the context of movement toward a satisfactory solution based roughly on the UNGA resolution, Sino-Vietnamese tensions could be reduced and Hanoi's relations with the rest of the world progressively normalized. A settlement of the Kampuchea issue could reduce Vietnamese dependence on the Soviet union and provide an opportunity to work for reduction in Soviet military access and a lessening of Soviet influence in Vietnam.

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-- Our policy has also sought to ensure the survival of the Khmer, and we have supported urgently humanitarian relief for the Khmer.

-- We have also attempted to sensitize the ASEANs more fully to the dimensions of the Soviet strategic threat and the implications of the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance in that connection.

-- We have encouraged China to phase out its support for the communist insurgencies in the ASEAN states and to cultivate better state-to-state relations.

As further specific measures, we have:

-- Indicated to friends that we will continue to support the ASEAN strategy in the United Nations, including support for the DK credentials in the UNGA. This latter position keeps pressure on the Vietnamese and maintains the legitimacy of the Khmer resistance.

-- We have heightened our moral and political support for the Khmer nationalists rallying against Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea. This effort included welcoming Khmer People's Nationalist Liberation Front Leader, Son Sann, to Washington. We have urged the Nationalists to unite, but have not pressured them to join a coalition with the Khmer Rouge unless, in their judgement, their own conditions and terms are met.

-- We promised Son Sann to look into possibilities for an increase of humanitarian aid to his villagers within the framework of the international relief program, and are doing so. We made no commitments on his requests for financial and material support, but we will watch closely the efforts to unite the Khmer and the attitude of our friends, particularly ASEAN, toward such developments. Creation of united front or coalition would lead us to review possible ways to help, but we have made no commitments to anyone on such aid.

-- We have examined means to tighten the economic pressures on Vietnam, and its access to the UN system and the international financial institutions. We have consulted with ASEAN and other friends to pursue, as appropriate, the results of these studies.

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-- We have thus far

~~I concentrated on diplomatic, political and moral support for the ASEAN strategy and the Khmer nationalists. We would not contemplate commitments to go beyond this stance during the visits to Beijing, ASEAN and ANZUS.~~

STRATEGY

~~Our objective concerning Kampuchea/Vietnam during the current trip to Beijing, Manila and Wellington will be to strengthen the consensus supporting the ASEAN strategy. This will involve nurturing the image of strong and durable American support for the strategy, both as a matter of principle and out of common strategic interests, shared in this context with Beijing, ASEAN and ANZUS.~~

~~In Beijing, we should comment positively on our shared strategic perceptions and raise the issues of the present DK leadership, in connection with maximizing international support for the strategy, and Chinese support for insurgencies in southeast Asia. In response to probable Chinese encouragement of U.S. material support for Khmer resistance, we would defer our decision at least until after consulting closely with ASEAN. With ASEAN, we will wish to work to strengthen the consensus, especially with waverers from Indonesia and Malaysia, and discuss privately individual ASEAN countries' attitudes toward the Khmer resistance. With ANZUS, your voice should be added to those seeking to reverse Australia's position of abstaining on DK credentials.~~

~~Objectives and talking points on Kampuchea tailored to the three stops are included in the consolidated talking points.~~

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Clearances: EA:FZBrown
EA/C:DJohnson
S/P:MMinton
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